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ABSTRACT

To obtain information from female school administrators about their career paths, mentoring, external barriers and strategies used to overcome them, and differences in attitude toward their careers since 5 years ago, 18 of 26 Pennsylvania administrators selected from a total population of 93 were interviewed. The women tended to follow staff rather than line career paths and remained in the classroom longer than men. Mentoring occurred as frequently with women as with men. External barriers tended to be systemic and closely tied to sex-stereotyping. Strategies used to overcome these barriers included determination, open communication, and patience. Twelve of the women reported a change in attitude regarding future growth and development over a 5-year time period. Issues discussed are illustrated by numerous personal accounts, and a table is used to identify respondents by position and geographic location. (23 references) (EJS)

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# Reflections of Female School Administrators Regarding Their Careers

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**Reflections of Female School Administrators Regarding Their Careers**

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**Objective**

With notable exceptions (Edson, 1988), most studies of gender differences in administrative careers were conducted by means of mailed questionnaires sent to respondents. Little information has been obtained from a first-hand perspective in which women were asked to reflect upon their careers in the areas of career paths, mentoring and barriers encountered so that similarities and differences could be discerned. Through the collection of personal, narrative accounts of female school administrators who have changed positions either laterally or vertically between 1985 and 1990 that necessary dimension is added to the existing body of literature.

**Perspective**

Historically in our society women have been ignored as potential leaders (Biklen, 1980). Women have always been underrepresented in the management positions in a field they have dominated at the classroom level since universal compulsory education (Schmuck, 1975). A look at the number of women in school administration since 1905 uncovers consistent male dominance in all positions except in the early days of the elementary school principalship (Shakeshaft, 1987). Thus, access to control of the educational system in which women serve

continues to be denied to the majority of female teachers (Shapiro, 1987).

In the state of Pennsylvania, as in the whole of the United States, women hold fewer school administration positions than men (Pavan, 1985). During the 1989-1990 school year in Pennsylvania, females occupied 5.8 percent of the superintendencies, 17.6 percent of the assistant superintendencies, 5.8 percent of the secondary principalships and 27.4 percent of the elementary principalships (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1990).

Comparisons of the percent of positions held by women, with percent of certificates awarded to women each year, clearly show that the job pool of qualified women candidates is much greater than the numbers employed. Women do not lack the preparation and certification needed for school administrative positions. Administrative jobs have become available, but women are not being hired eventhough they hold the required credentials (Pavan, 1985). Projections presented by Schneider (1986) indicate that within the next decade approximately eighty percent of the educational administrative positions will open nationwide. Since it has been documented that women do make extensive job search efforts (Pavan, 1988), the underrepresentation of women as school leaders remains a puzzle. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to attempt to determine why the percentage of women in educational administrative positions remains so small in comparison to the number of females in education.

**Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used to describe the similarities and differences among incumbent female administrators in Pennsylvania relative to career paths, mentoring and perceived external barriers. Personal and telephone interviews were conducted to collect the information used in the investigation. Also, comparisons were made to responses given in a Fall, 1985 survey by Pavan, Temple University to determine if there was any significant change in responses from 1985 to 1990.

**Population and Sample**

The study's population consisted of the ninety three previously identified female administrators in Pennsylvania who participated in the 1985 study conducted by Pavan. Records obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (1990) listing presently employed female administrators were used to identify members of the sample. The 1985 list was compared to the 1990 list of incumbents and changes in job position were noted. A second source of identification was records maintained by Pavan. Names of women who had changed positions either laterally or vertically were culled from the list and included in the sample. From the original ninety three women, twenty-six were identified to participate in this study. The sample consisted of women holding the following positions in 1990: superintendent (6), assistant superintendent (6), secondary principal (5), secondary assistant principal (2) and elementary principal (7). Contacts were made by Pavan either personally or by letter to solicit their

willingness to participate in the study. A follow-up contact was made.

One of the original twenty-six women moved out of state, thereby reducing the number to twenty-five female administrators. Of the twenty-five, a total of twenty or eighty percent agreed to participate in the study, however, due to scheduling conflicts, interview arrangements were made with eighteen or seventy-two percent of the total sample. The eighteen women who participated in the 1990 study held the following positions: superintendent (6), assistant superintendent (2), secondary principal (4), assistant secondary principal (2) and elementary principal (4). Table 3.1 represents respondents by positions (1985 and 1990) and by geographic location. An attempt was made to balance geographic location, but the determination of the interviewees was based on their change in position and their willingness to participate in the study.

Due to the small number of identifiable female administrators in central and western Pennsylvania, 66.6 percent of the interviewees were employed in school districts located in the eastern section of the state. Nine of the school districts had pupil enrollment ranges of 1500 to 5,000; nine of the districts had pupil enrollment ranges of 5,001 to 100,000+. The districts were representative of urban, suburban and rural settings and had diverse socio-economic statuses.

**Instrument/Data Analysis**

The two-page interview instrument grew out of an original

questionnaire designed by Pavan of Temple University for her Fall, 1985 state-wide study of male and female incumbents and aspirants. The interview questions were open-ended as the purpose of the format was to elicit as much spontaneous narrative as possible. Notes were taken during the interview, but all responses were tape recorded (with permission) to permit the interviewer to concentrate on what was being shared rather than on the transcription of text.

In order to determine underlying or hidden reasons why there is such a disproportionately low percentage of women in leadership positions, the women were asked to reflect upon their careers over the past five years to determine what, if any, differences exist between pre-1985 and post-1985. Reflections focused in the areas of career paths, mentoring and perceived barriers.

Upon completion of the eighteen interviews, each tape was replayed several times and analyzed. Key statements, graphic illustrations and patterns in the areas of career paths, mentoring and perceived external barriers were identified. Notations were made on charts under grouped headings for each of the questions. The responses were then categorized according to similarities and differences in an attempt to identify common themes and threads. The data were used to draw general and specific conclusions regarding the underlying reasons for the disproportionate number of women in educational leadership roles in Pennsylvania.

Identification of respondents was confined to the personal

narrative accounts reported in the findings. Each narrative was offered with only a reference to the category of position held, number order within that category and geographic location to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The method of reporting did, however, permit the reader to see the totality of the individual (see Table 3.1).

**Summary of Major Findings**

Findings will be presented in the following order: 1985 Profile; 1990 Profile; career paths; aspirations; mentoring given and received and its effect on leadership search; perceptions of external barriers and strategies used to overcome those barriers; and overall differences in attitude toward career in pre-1985 and post-1985.

**1985 Profile**. The Pennsylvania female administrators who were interviewed in 1990 were either aspiring or incumbent administrators in 1985 when they responded to the mailed questionnaire (Pavan, 1985). Generally, the female respondent was white, forty years old, married and had received or was working toward a doctorate degree. More specifically, the age range was 33-54. Twelve of the women were married, two were divorced and four were single. Ten of the women had already received doctorate degrees and eight were enrolled in a degree program at a local university. The distribution of positions held was as follows: superintendent (2), assistant superintendent (3), secondary principal (1), elementary principal (1), assistant elementary/secondary principal (4), specialist teacher (4),

director (2) and study leave from the position of teacher (1). Six respondents indicated a desire to become a superintendent within the next five years; the remaining twelve indicated a desire to work in administration in the capacity of elementary principal and secondary principal within five years. Two respondents noted an interest in Intermediate Unit administration and one indicated an uncertainty about her next desired position.

**1990 Profile**. The Pennsylvania female administrators who were interviewed for this study had attained a new administrative position within the five year interval between 1985 and 1990. The change was lateral or vertical. Generally, the female respondent was white, 45 years old, married and had received a doctorate degree. Specifically, the age range was 38-59. Eleven were married, four were divorced and three were single. During the five year interval, there were two divorces and one re-marriage. Five women earned doctorate degrees so that fifteen of the eighteen women now held a doctorate. Two women continued their pursuit of the doctorate and one contemplated a return to school within the next year to complete the degree requirements.

The distribution of positions held was as follows: superintendent (6), assistant superintendent (2), secondary principal (4), elementary principal (4) and assistant secondary principal (2). Only two of the twelve women not yet superintendents indicated a desire to become a superintendent; two expressed an interest in college/university teaching; two indicated they had reached their career goal; and ten now

expressed an uncertainty about their ultimate career goals. Seven of the respondents reached their next desired position as noted in the 1985 study within the prescribed time period and four exceeded the career goals reported in 1985.

**Career Paths**. Women in the study were asked to share their reasons for entering the teaching profession and discuss their entry awareness level of career advancement opportunities. Primarily, women entered the teaching profession because of their love for children and/or societal expectations.

> My father was a teacher, my grandfather was a teacher so I had a family of teachers . . . I can't remember when I didn't want to teach. I taught my stuffed animals when I was a tyke. My mother was a nurse and I didn't like blood. I came from a very traditional family. I was a first generation Italian. My father was not a very progressive man. He felt women could do certain things. Being a nurse or teacher was one of them. And then if you were a wife and mother, you had different kinds of roles and you could continue to teach. My mother was very different. She was a woman way ahead of her time and certainly told me different messages. But, it was something I had seen done and I really enjoyed teaching. It's something I always thought I'd do. (Superintendent 5, central PA)

> I'm such a classic case. I guess I always wanted to be a teacher. I always liked school and wanted to be a teacher. And I pursued that. I also wanted to be an attorney. But, I very definitely was discouraged about that because females are teachers or nurses. I mean, I literally was told that by first of all a guidance counselor, a male guidance counselor [in high school] and a lot of messages from my family. I was the first generation to go to college and it would be an honorable profession. I was a good little girl and bought into those influences. I was absolutely classic! (Secondary Principal 3, western PA)

> One of the things is growing up at a time when it seemed like teaching and nursing were the two avenues open, basically. Females were encouraged to go into one of those two avenues. Also, I had an interest in working with people. (Secondary Principal 1, central PA)

> I always wanted to be a teacher since I was little. I role-played since I was in third or fourth grade with my dolls as students because I liked the idea of standing in front of kids involved in learning. (Assistant Superintendent 1, eastern PA)

A career involves a sequence of jobs or positions ordered so that each provides experiences considered necessary to perform in subsequent positions (Adkison, 1981). School administrators begin their careers by teaching. However, there is a difference between males and females in the way these careers develop (Ortiz, 1982).

In our society, men are encouraged, expected and even pressured to be upwardly mobile and professionally successful; women are not expected to pursue leadership positions (Schmuck, 1975). However, there are women who find themselves successful in the field of educational administration once they have attained a leadership position.

In a study conducted by Funk (1988), responses indicated that women did not do long-range career planning upon entering teaching. Thus, although the women interviewed were successful in attaining leadership positions and had, what could be construed as a career path, the findings revealed that that path was merely

serendipitous. Very few of the respondents had a conscious awareness level regarding career paths. Most recognized that they were on a path long after they had taken the first step or had walked many miles.

> It was when I was working with the state department that I became aware of career advancement. In that organization, there was a young woman, and by that time I was no longer young; I was in my forties. She was young; she was in her thirties. And, I watched her and I could see a difference between the two of us in style. She planned her next moves. She knew where she was going and she planned those moves and she took steps to make those moves happen. And I thought, "Wow, that's really the difference between her generation and mine." My generation, or me in particular, I didn't plan anything. People would come to me and say, "Could you do this for us now?" and I'd say, "Sure." And I jumped from job to job to job because it happened at the moment to be convenient for me to do it. And, I thought to myself, "It's really an interesting difference." And, I think it's generational. (Assistant Superintendent 2, eastern PA)

> I did not set out to be a teacher. I was a political science major with a teaching certificate. I married and moved to a new area and began to look for a job. I applied for jobs within the National Park Service. I went to various corporations and what have you. I really wanted to be an ambassador, but I knew I could not do that with just being recently married, so I started looking for other jobs. To some degree, I had a career path. But, I'm going to be honest. In those days, I don't know if we were talking career path. You got out of school and you got a job! (Superintendent 1, eastern PA)

For some, teaching was their lifelong ambition. Several women, similar to those Shakeshaft spoke of who were commited to education, reported that they never thought beyond the classroom.

> I probably thought I was going to be a teacher forever. I really did. And, I thought teaching was probably there [and would be]. I look back on one of my old boyfriends and say, "Golly, if I had married him and moved to wherever he is now, I probably would have (still) been a teacher, but maybe I wouldn't have. I don't know. But, I never had administration in mind. (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

> I guess somewhere in the back of my mind was being a reading specialist, but beyond that, I didn't have any aspirations for anything else. (Elementary Principal 4, eastern PA)

> I just wanted to teach. My awareness level was raised when I got divorced in 1975. What happened was I was talking about going to law school actually and I was married to someone who said that that was just fine if I wanted to do that as long as dinner was on the table. There were a lot of things sitting there that just brought to a head. So, that was just a better opportunity to pursue things, frankly, than when you're married to someone who literally says something like, ". . . as long as dinner's on the table." So then, all those constraints . . . I was free to act on that. (Secondary Principal 3, western PA)

Only one of the eighteen responsents recognized that teaching was not a lifelong commitment and consciously targeted administration as one of her objectives.

> I must have figured it [awareness level] out pretty quickly because within the first three years I knew I wanted to enter administration. I made a decision early regarding a master's rather than certification because I knew I wanted administration. (Assistant Superintendent 1, eastern PA)

For the large majority of women interviewed, teaching was a career in and of itself. There was little or no awareness of career advancement at the time at which they entered the teaching profession. In fact, the women reported that they never gave administration a thought because it was not in their purview. Rather, their entrance into the world of administration was more incidental than not. Additionally, the women did not view the acquisition of their first administrative position as a precursor of future positions. Still, they did not set themselves on a career path. The women were more inclined to move to their next position at the suggestion of a colleague or because of circumstances. They did not tend to use any position primarily for the purpose of advancement,yet as they gained experience, they were able to see how those experiences would help them carry out the responsibilities of the new positions.

**Aspirations**. Crandall (1986) reported that women do not demonstrate an urgency to move beyond the principalship. Only seven percent of the women administrators who participated in her study aspired to a superintendency. Shakeshaft (1987) concurred and found that for too many more women, the superintendency is not a job that has appeal. The women in this study supported these findings.

Within the five-year interval between the two studies, the women expressed a significant change in their desire to advance

their present positions. Of the twelve women not yet holding the position of superintendent, ten strongly rejected the idea of pursuing a superintendency. They cited the personal toll the job would take on their lives as well as their lack of desire to be far removed from students.

> There's a possibility I may be one of the candidates for superintendent in my school district. There's a part of me that says, "Gee, I'd like to be a . . . I'd like to see if I can do anything to make a difference as a superintendent. I'd like to see if I can make it happen." I'd like to try my hand at it. But, I am fifty-three years old and recently married. I've entered into a wonderful new life, so my life has a balance to it now. We're talking quality of life. And, it's a very difficult decision to make because certainly, career-wise, that's the pinnacle. It would be a great co[illegible] for me to become superintendent, the first female superintendent in the county. (Assistant Superintendent 2, eastern PA)

> I'm not anxious to move out of the principalship yet. You're talking to somebody who's just feeling her oats after one year. So, I'd have to feel more confident before I move on. I wouldn't want to move on until I know this job pretty well, which might take me three to five years. I think right now I'd just like to get a permanent principal's certificate. (Elementary Principal 1, eastern PA)

> I don't know what I'd like to do in the future, but I know I have no desire for central administration. I don't want to be that far removed from students. (Elementary Principal 3, eastern PA)

After working in administration for a number of years since 1985, the women found that their personal lives were greatly affected. Many had to juggle the responsibilities of family, home and career. Those with children found that they had to become creative in terms of the way in which they spent time with their children. Others had to weigh the impact their career goals had on their desired quality of life with a spouse or significant other. Many spoke of the "balance" between career and family and the difficulty they experienced attempting to establish that balance. Aspirations, they found, were greatly affected by their need to establish that balance.

**Mentoring Given and Received: Effect of Mentoring on the Leadership Search**. For the majority of women in this study, mentoring served as the vehicle into administration. The mentorships were not planned. They evolved out of an immediate need, circumstance or situation in which the women found themselves. In most cases, the mentorship was reciprocal in nature, that is, both the mentor and the mentoree benefited from the experience.

> When he [a new Project Manager] came down to take the project over, there were two people out of the group that were assigned, funding-wise, and I had been asked before he came down did I want to go with this project or did I want to go with another project. I said I would like to stay with the beginning one because it was regular education and the other was special education. And so I had, along with this other woman, the knowledge-base. I knew how everything was put together . . . For him, I was the supplier of knowledge. (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

> I was lucky. They needed me. They needed what I could do for the organization and with that they also, I think, came to respect me for what I could do. (Superintendent 5, central PA)

> I would say the principal at the high school. It started because I have this tendency to give unsolicited opinions about how things should be run. And, in fact, he had articulated that to me that the principalship is a lonely job and you have to have somebody that you can trust. I'm not someone who goes and blabs everything. So, if something happened and he was upset and I had a free period, he'd call me down and he would rant and rave about whatever was bugging him. From that problem, because I'd say, "Why don't you do this or think about that", or whatever, I got into it. That's how that really emerged. (Secondary Principal 3, western PA)

Kram (1983) noted that the mentorship is advantageous to men and women in the business world because it has the potential to enhance career development through sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure/visibility and challenges offered to the one being mentored. Shakeshaft (1987) affirmed that a mentor is much more important to the individual woman than is a role model because it is the mentor who advised the woman, supports her for jobs, and promotes and helps her.The eighteen women who participated in this study supported these perspectives. In most In most cases, the mentors did not do much to advance the women's careers by sponsoring them for advanced positions. Rather, they they provided opportunities for the mentorees to learn, experience and grow in terms of their leadership abilities and styles.

> When I got my first administrative job outside the district, that was the personnel director's job, the superintendent there was very good in helping me to smooth off some of the rough edges as far as my adminstrative style. (Superintendent 5, central PA)

I had some help only in support, not in getting the job, although I did call a lot of people. There were people who I talked with who said, "Yeah, go for it." Then there were people who knew the district and just gave me background info and let me decide to go for it. (Superintendent 2, central PA)

Just in my discussion they made me see that I was doing things now to assist in the running of the department--working with discipline, being on different kinds of committees, making quasi-administrative decisions. Your judgment is sound, so you ought to do this. They feed your ego and you're only 26 years old, so you say, "Alright, I'll do it." (Assistant Secondary Principal 2, eastern PA)

My principal put a desk in his office for me and asked me to handle discipline problems . . . After I would handle something, we would sit down and talk about what I did and how he might have handled it. And, he would go over curriculum-type things. Just by his example. He had a routine that was easy to follow. (Elementary Principal 4, eastern PA)

Mentors played a significant role in that they served, also, to encourage and convince the women in this study that they were capable of handling administrative responsibilities. The large majority of the women had no awareness level regarding career advancement and, therefore, did not aspire to administrative positions. It was the mentor, along with other colleagues, who provided the "push" the women needed to try their hand at administration.

My first administrative position, I was really forced to apply for it. I'd still be at that school. I loved teaching. I had a female and male mentor who both said, "It's time. You have to do it." So I became a House Director at a high school which was an administrative position. I did not feel I was competent at all, but I just did it. (Assistant Secondary Principal 2, eastern PA)

I had been teaching three or three and one-half years. The principal of my elementary school called me in August and said, "Why don't you come out and visit?" Being suspicious, I wanted to know why. "Well, we need to talk about some things." I went out to see him to find out that the superintendent of the district had had a heart attack and our principal was going to take over for him as an acting superintendent. He wanted me to be acting principal. That thought had never crossed my mind of going into administration or anything. And, I said to him, "Why me?" "Well, for several reasons," he said. One, I had always shown a lot of leadership and organization in getting the primary grades to do things, to use innovative techniques. I guess just general leadership kinds of things. The squeaky wheel syndrome and he thought I could do that. I was twenty-six. After the initial shock of it all I thought, "Geez, I could probably do this." Being young and naive, I did. The confidence level could have always been there. I guess I saw it as an opportunity, so why not? "What have I got to lose?" (Superintendent 2, central PA)

I'll be honest with you. When I applied for the teaching position and I came out of college I was positive I was going to be a great teacher. Again, I just wanted it and I knew I could do it. And, in looking at my other colleagues I knew that I did better in all my courses than they did, my demonstrations, you know, all those things helped build a confidence for me. So, I felt very secure in that. When it came to reading specialist, I think with the success I had in the classroom in teaching reading plus my proven experience, I knew I could do that and be good at it. When it came to the principal's position, I was in the doctoral program and my advisor said, "When are you going to apply for your certification for the principalship?" I said, "What do you mean?" And, he said, "Well, you have all the qualifications and you certainly have the ability." I guess I was thinking more of being a teacher even at the college level so, I applied for it and different people around me were saying, "You'd be an outstanding principal." The principal I had been working under for those three years at the elementary level, talk about a fantastic role model, told me, "Go for it! You can do it." (Superintendent 6, eastern PA)

There were four women who spoke of their confidence level and found that they, themselves, realized their capability to handle administration.

> Actually, I've always known that [I was capable of being an administrator]! Seriously, I just always felt I could run things . . . It never occurred to me that there was too much I couldn't do if I wanted to. And, I look back and say, "Where did you get the nerve?" To this day I probably suffer from that, thinking that, "Well, if I really wanted to, I could." That's said positively because it leads to some indecisiveness. (Secondary Principal 3, western PA)

> Just by observing other administrators and thinking I can do it and do it better! That may sound cocky, but that's an honest answer. Just observing other building leaders is probably what triggered me along. I was never afraid of it. I always had the confidence. (Assistant Superintendent 1, eastern PA)

Whether helping women directly or indirectly, when asked to discuss the significance of mentoring, all of the women felt that mentoring was important, but not always used to its fullest extent. Additionally, it was felt that mentors served to help gain a perspective and provide reflection. All of the women noted that they would serve as mentors if availed of the opportunity.

> I think there's a significance first in having somebody that encourages you and believes in you. That's real important because I know that if my mentors had been the type who said right away, "You know, I'm sorry, but I don't think you can make it or I don't think women can make it", my guess is I would have gone on anyway, but it would have made it a lot more difficult and I would have lacked a lot of self confidence. (Secondary Principal 1, central PA)

> I think that the sharing of ideas and letting you experience things encourages you to do it and let you know it's not that hard. If you had to go into it, I think if I went into this job and nobody told me anything, it would have been chaos. I'm organized, but it would have been, "What do I do here, what do I do there?" I just recall things I've seen my mentor do or how they handled things . . . I remember what other people did and I don't have to think, "Now, what'll I do?" I know what to do because I've seen it. I think mentors are really important. (Elementary Principal 4, eastern PA)

**External Barriers**. In our society, gender plays a major role in one's aspirations and achievements. The systemic research that exists today indicates that the social and psychological dynamics of being a female in our society is one important causative factor leading to women's underrepresentation in school management (Schmuck, 1975).

Edson (1988) reports that many women around the country find it difficult to accept the fact that discrimination in hiring remains widespread in school districts across the country. That

was not the case in this study. The women in this study cited two barriers that served to impact on their advancement. Those barriers were identified as gender-bias and family responsibilities. While neither served to impede the women from ultimately attaining leadership positions, each formed an obstacle that had to be overcome.

Gender-bias was judged to be an obstacle that will continue to exist as long as the number of women in administrative positions remains low and disproportionate. Much of the bias was termed insidious and was not, therefore, viewed as seriously deleterious to the women's efforts to acquire administrative positions.

> There was a point in my career when there was a new job created that I was to have gotten. Another player came into the game because of favors owed to him and he got the job. It was one of those where I could have filed a suit and won it, but one of those where I could have won the battle, but lost the war because when you sue your board, that word gets out. I think probably in my case because I weathered it and went on to bigger and better things, people can look back and say I'm a better person because of it. And even then, there were a lot of people who knew that it was wrong, it was a bad decision. But the fact that I stayed on the job and then tried to work within that system . . . there were an awful lot of people who said they would hire me just because of that. I continued to be a team player and eventually he got his comeuppence. There is justice in the world! I got a lot of support from people--friends and colleagues who said, "They screwed you," but that in the long run it wasn't worth the damage it would cause me to go after that. After a couple of years, I decided to move on. (Superintendent 2, eastern PA)

The new principal never introduced me to the staff the first day. I followed him around like a puppy dog. All the staff was aware that's what was happening. As he was telling me what to do, he was walking ahead of me and I was following behind him. It was hard. And I would wonder why I wanted this. And I'd say I know why I wanted this every time I saw those kids come through that hallway . . . I knew, then, why I wanted it. But, it was tough. I prayed a lot because I'm from the school where I'd cuss you out and get it off my mind but I knew I couldn't do that and maybe I'd have felt better but I had to just deal with it. Determination helped me to overcome because I was determined he wasn't going to run me away from that position, no matter how much I hurt inside. And that made me work even harder to provide the programs and so forth for the kids. I kept thinking in my mind, "These kids need me and I will be here. He will not run me away." That's what helped me to continue on. (Elementary Principal 3, eastern PA)

I think that up until the fact when I landed my first superintendency I think I suffered constantly from people thinking I had slept my way into the jobs I had gotten. Because I was always working for men, "a" man. Now, I work for a board of men. But, that hurt, that really bothered me because at first I used to think, "What can I do? I can't look any differently." I remember wearing things so tailored. I would never wear what I have on now. I remember dressing down, not wearing make-up or anything. And, I said to myself, "This is stupid. People are going to say it anyway. I know it's not true. People who really care about me know it's not true. I'm just going to forget it and that's their problem." And, it was nice because when I got my first superintendency, it just all of a sudden stopped. And, that was it. I haven't had to deal with it for eight years. What a nice way to work! I think you just ignore it. It's hard because it really hurts. It just makes you feel so insignificant. All the hours you put in and all the hard work you do is just wiped out by that one comment. (Superintendent 5, central PA)

The barrier was that there was a school board that didn't want to look beyond day one and a superintendent who's only interest was in finding a new job himself. So, the barrier was that the guy who had accepted the acting superintendent's job had to push to get them to name somebody when nobody was even going to go look. And then, they offered me a salary which was a cut in pay for taking over an assistant principal's job and working summers. It would have been $500 less than I was making teaching and coaching. [So] I turned it down. Part of that was the advice of my mentors. They both said, "Yeah, you'd be crazy to accept it. They're really over a barrel. They're not interested in looking at anybody else." So, I turned it down and they upped it by $1,000. So, a big raise, it wasn't. It wasn't anything like I should have been making. (Secondary Principal 1, western PA)

I could present myself well, I could talk about experiences, so they were not a barrier. The barrier I came up against and that I did something about was money. I was never offered what a man would have been offered in that position. When I came to that barrier I had to make a decision and say, "If I take this job, I'm going to lose some money. But in two or three years, I'll regain it. And, if I'm really doing what I want to do, money is not going to be the barrier that keeps me from doing it." They knew what I was making and they were offering me either below that or at that level. And, I was not sure I had the confidence to say that I'm not going to take this job unless you give me more money. Possibly a man would have. But, anyway, I made some conscious decisions to say, "I'm going to take this job and I'm going to show you what I can do. If you don't ever reward me for that, then I will leave. But, I'm going to take that chance that you're going to recognize and see what you can see in me." I think they realize that a female will work very, very hard so they know if they want a hard worker, they get the hard worker, but they're not going to pay them as much. (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

I applied for a more traditional type of principalship at the high school and was turned down. I remember the high school principal at the time saying, "If I hire you for this, people will say that you're sleeping with me. If I don't hire you", this is a great one, you'll love this . . . I wish I knew what I know now and I'd have had a better answer for him, "but, if I don't hire you for this, people will think that I'm not, so I want to do you a favor." He hired one of his football buddies. And I remember thinking, "God, he did me such a favor. He saved my reputation!" (Superintendent 5, central PA)

The district where I had worked for a dozen years prior to being involved with my mentor was very much filled with people who thought women should be bare-foot and pregnant. They only tolerated me. The fact that I wanted to go to school and they had to pay for it almost blew their minds! They appreciated the job that I did. They recognized the fact that I knew what I was doing, but they never encouraged me. They were always trying to squelch me. (Secondary Principal 2, western PA)

I've had the detective come into my school and say, you know, I wouldn't scare him. I said that we're not supposed to scare them, it's a matter of processing them . . . I feel people do tend to judge you based on your appearance as long as you're female. I'm not real strong physically. I don't look like I can take anyone on physically, but the kids will say, "Oh, she's no joke" once they've had to deal with me. People judge and they want to stereotype . . . I think it's still a man's world and we have a long way to go to deal with that. (Assistant Secondary Principal 1, eastern PA)

I have to tell you that when they, I had a fit but not to the extent I should have, but when I was in contention for the curriculum coordinator's position with a man, they asked me for our resumes on white [paper], then the superintendent reproduced one in pink and one in blue. I said, "I never want to see pink again!" To this day, you won't see pink. I was absolutely furious about that. Certainly, you could tell by the names on top that one's male and one's female. You don't have to color-code them! (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

> There have been times when I have applied for jobs and I was clearly the most qualified, but you could just tell that boards were not ready to hire a woman. I knew because I didn't get hired, for one thing, and just the body language said, "We're not thrilled with you." (Sitting back in their chairs with folded arms or not even looking at you.) These were mostly males but there are some females who are not convinced women can handle the job. (Superintendent 2, central PA)

Family Responsibilities. Women in the study cited areas of concern that were specifically related to family upbringing and family responsibilities. Although these issues were identified by the women as external barriers they do, in part, reflect the societal perceptions of the female's role in terms of the family. Therefore, they are actually a blend of internal and external barriers.

> I remember in the 1985 study talking about my family. That was one of my biggest obstacles because I can still remember my mother's comment in 1982 that she hated my doctorate. "I hate your doctorate because it has come between us." She didn't come to my graduation . . . I was the black sheep, rebellious. I wasn't doing it right, you see. I was supposed to get married and have children. Be a teacher and just be satisfied. "What's all this doctorate stuff and principal stuff? Don't you know where your place is?" Before my father died, he came up here [to the school] last summer with my mother and he was honestly proud of me. It took until the last year of his life . . . last summer I got the blessing. I never had their approval. It would have been nice. (Elementary Principal 1, eastern PA)

My biggest obstacle has always been balancing my family and my career. And, I never balanced it because it was always my career. It's whatever I get involved in in terms of work. They [my family] got by. I don't cook. I have someone that cleans. My husband helps me out with a lot of that. His work hours are shorter than mine. But, then, he has other activities because he's involved in music so he does have evening activities. He plays tennis and I love it when he does that because then I don't feel guilty. Finding that balance is important to me because of the kind of person I am. I'm a middle-of-the-road person. I'm not an extremist. I'm not one that takes risks and what have you. I'm not materialistic. I'm a company person. Whoever I work for I'm loyal to. So, I guess I'm always looking for that balance because you always look for what is happiness. I can't tell you right now that I have found that answer. I can't tell you that I'm totally happy 'cause I'm not. So, I'm really still struggling to find that balance. And, I don't know that I will. (Superintendent 1, eastern PA)

The biggest obstacle was my own family. Not that they weren't supportive, but the age at which they all were. We spent a year apart. We've two boys. The oldest was a senior in high school at the time I took the superintendency so he and his father stayed so he could graduate with the kids he had been in school with for twelve years. I took the twelve year old and moved 100 and some odd miles away. That was probably the biggest obstacle. It was tough, especially from the standpoint that the older boy responds much better to me in terms of what he was allowed to do than he did to his father. We decided to opt for a year of hell instead of a lifetime of guilt. In retrospect, kids adjust and that's the one thing where lot of females make a big mistake--they put their kids ahead of themselves. Kids will adjust better than we will. And, they'll make new friends and they'll be just as happy, if not happier. (Superintendent 3, central PA)

I have a latch-key child and every time they do programs on latch-key children, I start to feel guilty. Ever since I've been an administrator he's come home to an empty house. He's done it for years and he's only fourteen now. I've been in administration eight years so that tells you how long it's been. And you know, there are times when you feel real guilty about not sitting down and spending the amounts of time together. And, a female going into high school administration with kids is really hit hard because you do have all those evening obligations--the basketball games, the wrestling matches, the dances, etc. What I do is I just took the kids along and they learned from little on that when Mom had something at school, they went along. We took a bag full of books and crayons and whatever and they learned to sit there and entertain themelves because it was part of Mom's job. They've adjusted to it very well. (Superintendent 3, central PA)

I was traveling at a time when my daughter was in upper elementary and junior high school. And, anybody that tells me you need to be there for the "early" elementary years, I say fine, I understand the bonding part. But, you need to be there for the upper elementary and junior high years! They are much more traumatic. I mean, an early elementary kid, first, second and third grade can go to anybody for nurturing, but not at that other time. And, it was difficult. (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

I don't think if I had children I could do the job I'm doing to the extent that I'm doing it. My husband has a career that consumes him and for us, that works. But, for people who have small children, I think it must be terribly, terribly difficult. I'd say for any administrative job, but particularly for the superintendency in terms of all of the meetings and just the pressure of it. (Superintendent 2, central PA)

I'm wrestling with something now which is very, very difficult. People sort of alluded to it but I didn't know how it was going to be. I'm now making more than my husband for the first time and my husband has always supported the fact that I was there equally contributing. We figure out everything on a percentage basis. He has his checking account, I have my checking account and we have our checking account. It's sort of hidden a little bit this year. We're putting our daughter through graduate school, so what I've done is I've taken all my excess and I'm putting it into grad school so he sees that as a little bit different. It's for an objective that we want to achieve for and with her. So, I'm not taking it as individual loot, so to speak. It's going for that purpose. That's easier for him to tolerate than my salary. But, it's the first time it's flipped; the first year it's happened and next year it's going to go up again. Our daughter will finish, so we'll have to wrestle with it then. (Superintendent 4, eastern PA)

[After completing the master's degree] my husband wasn't convinced he wanted me to get a doctorate. Part of it was he didn't have a college degree and I think it took some acclimation. I think there's always that tendency--it's not typical for the female to have more degrees than the male and the marriage to stay in tact. That was always utmost in our minds. We had something we valued very highly. It was a total family relationship and we talked a lot so time went on. I think that my desire to continue to grow in the knowledge that I had for

It's somewhat difficult on my husband because we get mail addressed to Dr. and Mr. And, that's been kind of difficult for him. Although he's very proud of me and realizes I would never have done it if he hadn't been pushing me, he sometimes feels like he's an "extra" wheel. We just had a brochure that came through for an exchange trip to China and your spouse could go along. He said, "I'd feel like a 'fifth' wheel". So, that's been difficult and I think wives adjust better to that than husbands do. (Superintendent 3, central PA)

Therefore, they are actually a blend of internal and external barriers.

Determination, open communication and patience were the strategies used by these women to overcome the barriers of gender-bias and family responsibilities.

**Overall Differences in Attitude Toward Their Careers 1985 and 1990**. Twelve of the eighteen women interviewed reported a change in attitude regarding future growth and development over the five-year time period; six reported no significant change or an uncertainty as to whether any change had occurred. For those citing a difference, the change was in their confidence level and in their understanding of themselves. The five-year interval gave them time to gain a personal insight regarding their capabilities and career goals. Moreover, the time permitted many of the women to look introspectively at themselves in terms of their real desire to continue to pursue advanced administrative positions.

**Discussion**. When comparing the results of this research to the study conducted by McKee (1988) regarding career paths and Pavan (1986a) regarding mentoring experiences, there are similarities. McKee (1988) and D'Angelo (1990) reported that males and females follow different career paths. The women tended to follow staff rather than line career paths and remained in the classroom longer than men. Pavan (1986a) noted that mentoring occurred as

frequently with men as with women. Additionally, research conducted by Edson (1988) reported that mentors furnish female aspirants with valuable support. Thus, the findings of this study offered no change in information regarding these two areas.

External barriers (Pavan, 1986 and Rometo, 1982) tend to be more difficult to overcome because they are systemic, that is, they are more closely tied to sex-stereotyping and socialization. Although these barriers are surmountable, they often require social and institutional changes. Women in this 1990 study expressed a belief that bias does exist but rejected the notion that it could not be overcome. Women seeking administrative positions need to exercise determination and perseverance. Also, they need to develop strategies that can be used to overcome any barriers they encounter.

What was most surprising about the women in this study was that the majority had internalized societal expectations which minimized their perceived ability to handle administrative tasks. Too many needed to be convinced of their capabilities and leadership potential. Few used acquired positions to further their careers and the majority failed to develop a career plan.

Societal expectations regarding women's roles as wives and mothers impacted greatly on the women's efforts to pursue higher level positions. Women in the study conducted by Edson (1988) cited the influence of societal stereotypes of women as wives and mothers and men as husbands and executives on their career goals. Women in this study agreed. Having to deal with issues

related to salaries, advanced degrees, guilt and parental/societal expectations forced the women to re-examine their ambitions and question whether the administrative job they sought was worth personal toll. Eventhough the women appeared able to overcome barriers of gender-bias and family responsibilities on one the hand, they appeared to succumb to the societal expectations and perceptions on the other. By doing this, they permitted the internal barriers of low self-perception, low self-confidence and guilt to affect the way in which they viewed and pursued their careers.

What, then, to some observers could be termed passivity may, in reality, be the constant internal struggle career women in the 90's face. There is always the nagging question of how far one can advance without jeopardizing personal relationships, motherhood and personal time. For some, the commitment is just not worth the hassle; for others, the decision to proceed is fraught with guilt, recrimination and wistfulness. In short, there is always the question of whether the advancement is worth it. Even though the women who participated in this study did indeed advance and most agreed they would not have missed the experience of working in administration, once there, the desire to continue moving into the upper eschelons of administration was diminished and inner personal conflict was heightened. The experiences of the women who participated in this study suggest that the number of women in administrative positions is low because working women in their 30's and 40's were raised with

a particular kind of psychology that doesn't necessarily match the kinds of positions they now are expected to be in (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1987). Society perpetuates the need to continually deal with the internal struggle between career and self. How much should women be willing or expected to relinquish as wives, mothers and females to advance their careers?

**Educational Significance**

The information gleaned from the personal accounts of these female incumbent administrators should serve to offer direction to those women who aspire to positions of leadership. Women who wish to enter administration must carefully weigh the effects such a move will have on their personal lives and be aware that there may be a need to make adjustments if they are to succeed. Aspirants should be reminded, however, that the women in this study agree that the experience is deemed worthy of any personal sacrifice one has to make.

Additionally, the information presented may be used in the following ways:

1) to help the general public increase their awareness level regarding the availability and capability of successful credentialed women.

2) to assist school district personnel and school board members in their assessment of the qualifications of female candidates and of the district hiring practices and procedures.

3) to enlighten the general public and school district personnel of the deleterious effects of sexism and sex-role

socialization on females.

4) to encourage graduate leadership schools to evaluate the types of guidance and counseling offered female matriculants.

5) to promote the formation of formal and informal support groups designed to form mentorships as a means of helping aspirants attain leadership positions and incumbents advance to the next level of administrative responsibility.

Table 3.1

Respondents by Position and Geographic Location

| Respondent | Position 1985 | Position 1990 | Geographic Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Principal | Supt. | Eastern PA |
| S2 | Ass't to Supt. | Supt. | Central PA |
| S3 | Ass't HS Prin. | Supt. | Central PA |
| S4 | Director | Supt. | Eastern PA |
| S5 | Superintendent | Supt. | Central PA |
| S6 | Principal | Supt. | Eastern PA |
| | | 34% of total sample | |
| AS1 | Ass't to Supt. | Ass't. Supt. | Eastern PA |
| AS2 | Spec. Educ. Dir. | Ass't. Supt. | Eastern PA- |
| | | 11.1% of total sample | |
| SP1 | Ass't. Princ. | Sec. Prin. | Central PA |
| SP2 | Supv. Curric. | Sec. Prin. | Western PA |
| SP3 | Teacher on Leave | Sec. Prin. | Western PA |
| SP4 | Ass't. Prin. | Sec. Prin. | Eastern PA |
| | | 22.2% of total sample | |
| ASP1 | Reading Spec. | Ass't. Sec. Principal | Eastern PA |
| ASP2 | Ass't. Prin. | Ass't. Sec. Principal | Eastern PA |
| | | 11.1% of total sample | |
| EP1 | Teacher | Elem. Prin. | Eastern PA |
| EP2 | Teacher | Elem. Prin. | Eastern PA |
| EP3 | Ass't. Prin. | Elem. Prin. | Eastern PA |
| EP4 | Reading Spec. | Elem. Prin. | Eastern PA |

Code: S Superintendent
AS Assistant Superintendent
SP Secondary Principal
ASP Assistant Secondary Principal
EP Elementary Principal

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